

VI. *An Abstract of a Book, Entituled, NEKPOKHΔEIA: Or, The Art of Embalming; wherein is shewn the Right of Burial and Funeral Ceremonies, especially that of Preserving Bodies after the Egyptian Method. Together with an Account of the Egyptian Mummies, Pyramids, Subterranean Vaults and Lamps, and their Opinion of the Metempsychosis, the Cause of their Embalming: As also a Geographical description of Egypt, the Rise and Course of the Nile, the Temper, Constitution and Physick of the Inhabitants; their Inventions, Arts, Sciences, Stupendious Works and Sepulchres, and other curious Observations any ways relating to the Physiologie and Knowledge of this Art. Part I. Illustrated with a Map and fourteen Sculptures.* By Tho. Greenhill, Surgeon. In 4to. London, 1705.

**I**N considering the great Incroachments and daily Abuses of the *Undertakers* by practising the *Balsamic Art*, as also how little had been wrote on that subject, the *Author* was willing to vindicate the Honour of his Company, and to retrieve the Practice of so ancient, so useful, and so noble an Art as that of *Embalming*: He was therefore desirous that some Ingenious and Learned Person, thoroughly qualify'd by the Knowledge and Practice of the several Branches of *Physick*, might have undertaken this Work; but meeting with none that would give themselves so

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much

much trouble, he thought it better to exert his small Talent, than that the *Balsamic Art*, which bears so considerable a Figure in *Surgery*, as well as other Sciences, should be neglected and passed by as a matter not worth taking notice of. A farther motive to his Undertaking was, that he hoped by submitting with the greatest modesty and humility to the Learned World, they would excuse all faults, by reason, it is not so much to be found fault with, if in attempting to find out an unbeat'en Path, one often mistake ones way.

To this end therefore he applics himself, by way of Letter, to three Persons, who for their skill in History, Antiquities and Languages; their knowledge of Books, Manuscripts, or Things themselves, as well as their Experience and Practice in *Physick* and *Surgery*, evidently appear to be proper Judges of this matter.

The first Letter is addressed to *Charles Bernard, Esq;*, Serjeant-Surgeon to her *Majesty*; at that time Master of the Surgeons Company, and one of the Surgeons of *St Bartholomew's Hospital*.

In this Letter the *Author* shews the Excellency of *Surgery*, and that *Anatomy* and *Embalming* are Branches thereof, and equally to be esteem'd; the one informing us of the constituent Parts of the Body, and the other preserving them fresh in our Sights and Memories: That *Embalming* is no less ancient and noble than *Surgery* itself, whence he infers the Authority and Reasonableness of its Use: That the *Naturalists*, the *Physician*, the *Surgeon*, and the *Anatomist* reap great advantages in the way of Knowledge, from the preservation of Animals and other Rarities. The *Naturalist* makes use of it in collecting and preserving a numberless variety of Things in the Animal and Vegetabls World. The *Physician*, in preserving the Juices of the Body from Malignant and Putrid Feavers. It teaches the *Surgeon* the Art of Bandage or Rouling; as also to know what Remedies are proper against Mortifications, &c. It

It teaches both the *Physician* and *Surgeon* (by *Anatomy*) the situation and parts of a Man's Body, and to prepare true and natural Schemes of the Veins, Arteries, Nerves, &c. Then he observes, that without the *Balsamic Art Anatomy* is deficient; inasmuch as it can neither so particularly, nor frequently show us, what in conjunction with it, may be, without any offence, contemplated at any time, and as often as we please; so that the present Age accounts the chief use of this Art to be in *Anatomical Preparations*, as also that the Knowledge of it may be necessary in our Domestic and Culinary Affairs; such as conserving all sorts of Roots, Herbs and Fruits; preserving Wines, Fruits, Flesh, Fish, &c. But the more antient, more general, and more proper use of *Embalming* lies in preserving a Human Dead Body intire; more Ancient, as having been devised by the Wise and Learned *Egyptians*, and more general, in that it relates to every particular Person; which nevertheless being looked upon as an unnecessary expensive trouble, was another reason for him to assert, that *Embalming* was a particular part of that Duty, which obliges all Mankind to take care of their Dead. In order to this, he first gives us some cogent Reasons to prove the Right of Burial, what things are necessary thereto, whether Ceremonies are needless and Superstitious, or Monuments Vain-glorious, and this he lays down according as Nature dictates, the Law of *God* appoints, and the Law of Nations directs and obliges. Then he shews the want of Burial to be a Punishment and Curse, and that even the particular Ceremonies of Funerals are not to be neglected; yet withal cautions his Reader to avoid the mistake of thinking the want of it, or any particular Ceremony thereof, may be any ways prejudicial to a Christian Soul, or any occasion of the deficiency of the least part of the Body at the Resurrection, and only shows the Infamy and Disgrace of a Body being denied Burial; and how far, wherefore and to what end the following customs are to be made use of;

such as *Kissing the Dead*, *Closing their Eyes*, *Conclamation*, *Sounding Brazen Vessels*, *Washing*, *Anointing* or *Embalming* the Dead, *Adorning*, *Dressing* and *Crowning* the Corps, *Laying it out*, *Carrying it forth*, the *Funeral Procession*, *Burning* or *Burying* the Corps, the manner of *Mourning*, and in short, many things relating to the fore and after part of the *Funeral Duty*; giving a great variety of pertinent Quotations out of Ancient Authors, intermixed with good conjectures of what inducements the Ancients were influenc'd by, in falling into and adhering to their various and respective Customs: But his main View is to show how far these *Funeral Rites* and *Ceremonies* are useful and allowable, when accompanied with the Art of *Embalming*; and on the contrary, how vain and ridiculous they are when used without it; especially if they do but in the least exceed the bounds of Modesty and Frugality. And thus having shewn, as aforesaid, how and when *Funeral Ceremonies* are useful, as also that they are insignificant without *Embalming*; he tells you moreover, " That care is due ' to the Body, tho' Lifeless, upon the consideration, that ' the Soul, in a separate state, longs for Re-union, and ' wishes her Dead Companion to share in her then present ' felicity, by virtue of eternizing Monuments. He sets ' forth, that *Embalming* is the best and most lively way of ' preserving the memory of deceased Friends, by giving a ' real Presence, instead of faint and shadowy Representa- ' tions, and brings abundance of *Theological*, *Physical* and ' *Political Arguments*, in vindication of the Art of *Em- ' balming*; but not having room to insert them, we will only mention two or three of the latter.

' First, If we take it in a general sense, as the Art of pre- ' serving the Memory of Man, as well as his Body, it is very ' extensive and infinite. In this sense, all the Monuments ' of the Ancients, Statues, Poems, Writings, &c. may be ' esteemed a kind of *Embalming*: And in the same respect, ' *Fame* may not improperly be called the Goddess and Pa- ' troness

• trones of *Embalming*, and *Mercury* her chief Minister, to  
 • proclaim to the World the Heroic Acts of memorable and  
 • famous Men. Secondly, Having shewn that all things  
 • intended to preserve a Name may be comprehended un-  
 • der this general sense of *Embalming*, he sets forth, that  
 • the *Balsamic* Art, properly so called, is at once the best  
 • and most durable way to compass that end, all other Mo-  
 • numents being known to decay and moulder. Thirdly,  
 • the *Balsamic* Art is recommended not only by its durati-  
 • on, but by its great use in other Sciences, particularly  
 • *Physiology*, *Anatomy*, *Surgery* and *Physick*, as intimated a-  
 • bove. Fourthly, *Embalming* is necessary for transporting  
 • Bodies to the Paternal Sepulchres, for which most People  
 • have a particular desire. Fifthly, *Embalming* not only  
 • prevents the Plague and Putrefactions, and consequently  
 • frees from the Terror and Deformity of Death, but like-  
 • wise secures dead Bodies from the insults of Insects and  
 • Brutes, by reason of its bitter and ungrateful Taste.  
 Lastly, Considering the *Egyptian* way of *Embalming* by roll-  
 ing, and the Modern by wrapping up in Searcloath, ob-  
 scure the Object, and are also imperfect upon several other  
 accounts, the *Author* endeavours to show a possibility of  
 inventing a method how to preserve the whole *Compages*  
 of the Body for ever without Putrefaction, in such manner  
 as its Texture and Structure may remain entire, of the same  
 proportion as before, and of the same Colour and Flexibi-  
 lity, without any visible contraction, diminution or uncon-  
 formity of Parts, whereby the Dead Corps may be kept by the  
 Parents, or handled by the *Anatomist* without any offensive  
 Smell, or fastidious *Mader*. So that Bodies thus *Embalmed*  
 seem not to be dead but asleep, waiting for the Resurrec-  
 tion, and differ from the Living in nothing but Speech and  
 Motion.

The second Letter is inscrib'd to Dr *John Lawson*, some-  
 time *President* of the College of Physicians, *London*; in  
 which, altho *Embalming* be its chiefly intended scope, yet  
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the *Author* considering that the *Egyptians* have been allowed to be the first Inventors of Arts and Sciences, and that they were the only People who used this particular manner of *Embalming*, treated of in this Letter, he thought it requisite to consider every particular circumstance of time and place, the several Drugs, Plants, Minerals and many other things which are advantageous to the *Egyptians* above other Nations, as also to enquire into the reasons which induced them to study this Art, and after what manner they came to find it out. To this end, he gives a short Geographical Description of *Egypt*, and takes notice of the Salubrity of its Air and Water, with the Rise and Course of the *Nile*, Fertility of the Soil and Sagacity of the People, with several necessary Remarks on their Religion, Customs, Arts, Diseases, Physick and whatever else might tend to the Discovery and Knowledge of this lost Art. Wherefore in the first place he shews how *Egypt* is situated and bounded, together with its Extent, Division, its several Denominations, Number of Cities and Inhabitants, as also how it came to be so populous, and to be accounted the Mistress of the World, and Mother of Arts and Sciences. He gives the Characters of both the Ancient and Modern *Egyptians*, with their Make, Complexion, Temper, Constitution, Habit of Body and Diseases; how fruitful they were in Children, very long liv'd and of great Antiquity: That they were the first Inventors of *Physic*, *Anatomy*, *Chymistry*, *Surgery* and *Embalming*; of *Geometry*, *Astronomy*, *Mathematics* and the like; from whence it came to pass, they performed greater and more wonderful Works than the World besides. He shews you their opinion of the *Metempsycosis*, and their Belief in the Resurrection; how they came at first to find out *Embalming*, and how they performed it. That there were several Kinds of *Embalming*, viz. with *Asphalt* or *Pissaphait*, with *Cyl* or *Gum* of *Cedar*, with *Aromatics* and *Spices*. That there were several Officers belonging to this Work, such as a *Clerk*, a *Priest*,

Priest, or a Physician; an Embalmer or Surgeon, a Pollinator or Apothecary; a Dissector or Anatomist; a Painter or Salter; a Designer or Painter, a Herald, Currier and the like: Also ~~Excorior~~ a Dresser of the Dead and ~~Excorior~~ one that furnished all necessaries for Funerals, called in Latin, *Liberitarius*. He likewise shews the particular Ceremonies used about the Dead, such as were their Coffins and Scroles painted with Hieroglyphick Characters, &c. the Books, Writings, Arms, Mails, Images, Averruncal, Prophylactic and Polychararistick Statues; which were either included in, hanging upon, or appertaining to the Mummies, representing their Superstitions and Magical way of Embalming. Then he tells you, that after every thing was got ready for the Funeral, how the *Embalmed* Body was put on Board a Ship called *Barris*, and by the Ferryman *Charon* wafted over the Lake *Acheron*, and there judged and tryed according to the several Virtues, Vices and Actions of its past Life; and accordingly either honoured with the greatest Praises and Commendations, and Magnificently Interr'd, or else mightily proclaimed against, and deprived of Sepulture: That it was this that made even the *Egyptian* Kings themselves to live uprightly, fearing so much as to anger the common People whilst alive, lest they should incur their Eternal Hatred after their Death.

Our Author likewise adds, that the *Egyptians*, to prevent borrowing, which was the Parent of Idleness, Frauds and Branglings, suffered none to borrow, but on condition they pawned the Body of their Ancestor, and it was reputed both an Impiety and Infamy, not to redeem it so soon as it was possible; so precious a Pledge was it esteemed, in so much, he that dyed before he had acquitted that Duty, was denied Burial. Other strange Ceremonies he recounts, such as putting the *Embalmed* Bodies into Cases Carved after their own similitude, and setting them up in Niches in their Halls and Parlours in great order and very richly adorned, where they took a great delight to see a long

Race of Ancestors., in a manner with as much satisfaction as if they were alive and conversant with them : Nay, as several Authors assert, they placed them at Table like Guests, and made merry with them, by Eating and Drinking ; but he concludes, that such as Buried their Dead out of their Houses, in the Fields and Plains, built *Sepulchres* for them, as noble as possible their circumstances would admit, chusing rather to have their Monuments magnificently built, than their Dwelling Houses ; forasmuch as they despised the present Life, and took little care in building their Habitations, looking upon them but as so many Inns and Baiting places, where they were to inhabit but for a Season ; whereas the Glory of a future Life, that was to be procured by Virtue, they greatly esteemed, and consequently spent their whole Care, Study and Riches about the magnificency of their Sepulchres, which they called Sempiternal and Eternal Houses, looking upon the time they are to dwell here on Earth, as nothing, in respect of the stay they were to make in the Grave.

The third Letter is to Dr *Hans Sloane*, Secretary to the Royal Society, and Fellow of the College of Physicians, *London*.

Being a succinct account of the *Pyramids*, *Subterranean Vaults* and *Lamps* of the *Egyptians* ; for as in the foregoing Letter was fully shewn the manner of *Embalming* Dead Bodies, in this the *Sepulchres* or *Repositories* wherein they were laid, is chiefly consider'd : Forasmuch as the *Egyptians* did not only content themselves with preserving their Dead from Putrefaction, but likewise with equal care provided *Conditories* that might be lasting as the Body, and in which it might continue secure, both from the Injuries of Time and Persons, because they Religiously believed, that so long as the Body endured, so long would the Soul continue with it, not as a quickning or animating Spirit, but as an Attendant or Guardian, without going into any other Body, as otherwise they thought it would, firmly

firmly believing the *Transmigration*. To this end therefore they built their *Hypogea* and *Pyramids*, as lasting Monuments to preserve them from the injuries of Time and Weather, for which reason they chiefly made them of a *Pyramidal form*; the better to secure them from Ruin. Our Author shews their Situation, Number and Founders, as likewise how many Men were employ'd in the building of them, together with a compleat Description of the great *Pyramid*, its Entrance, first and second Galleries, Antechambers and spacious Chamber wherein *Cheops* Tomb stands. He likewise describes the second and third *Pyramid*, with the Lodgings of the Priests, and the monstrous figure of the *Sphinx* representing *Momptha*, and after various Observations and Reflections on those Structures, he proceeds to describe the *Subterranean Caves* near the *Pyramids*, together with the *Mummies* both of Men and Birds therein contained; as also an Account of the *Perpetual Lamps*, supposed to have burnt in the first *Pyramid* and *Subterranean Vaults*, to what end they were invented, and of what matter composed. He shews how that they esteem'd *Fire* the Emblem of the Soul and of Eternal Life, and gives the Sacred Reason why they instituted the *Feast of Lamps*, &c. In a word, he has given us more light into this *Art*, which contains the History of the first Antiquities of the World, than any of those imperfect Accounts of *Herodotus* and *Diodorus Siculus*, and has improved it in some things, and in others apply'd it to those Uses that have hardly before been thought of. All which renders the whole Work more compleat than any other Book wrote hitherto upon that subject.